



Children were filled with joy at Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela yesterday, as their favourite characters from Sisimpur performed in front of their very eyes. The show's Halum, Ikri and Tuktuki, among others, put on a wonderful show at the children's corner of Suhrawardy Udyan. Children were also seen huddled in front of stalls catering to them, some trying to reach the books on display, while others climbing on to their parents' lap to get a better look.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Big day for little ones

SAYED MOHMUD ULLAH

Hundreds of children surrounded Sisimpur Mancha at Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela yesterday noon, shouting, "We love to read books!" They were accompanied by mascots of the popular characters from Sesame Street's Bangladeshi adaptation.

Marking the first Shishu Prohor (special hours dedicated to children), Sisimpur's Halum, Ikri and Tuktuki recommended the children to read more books and consequently performed skits, much to their excitement. "I love Halum because he can sing loudly; last year I hugged him but today [yesterday], we are in a huge gathering, so I'm not sure I can do that," said six-year-old Rafan Ahmed, who came with his father Rayhan Ahmed, to the fair.

Seeing his son's excitement, Rayhan himself was smiling, while witnessing characters one would normally only see on TV. Amid strict security measures by law enforcers, their performance continued for 15 minutes.

With Sishu Prohor continuing from 11am to 1pm on every Friday and Saturday, Sisimpur is scheduled for three times slots -- 11:30am, 3:30pm and 6pm -- at the book fair, said Muhaiminul Abir, a stall attendant of Sisimpur. The representative said their stall has over 100 books and toys based on Sisimpur stories. "Children are happy to see their favourite characters, and they are also buying our books," he added.

Not only Sisimpur, other parts of the children's corner -- situated at Suhrawardy Udyan -- also have different stalls selling a variety of books on Bangla cartoons, ghost stories, general knowledge, rhymes and science.

The little ones, donned in colourful outfits, were browsing the stalls and nagging their parents to buy books. "I bought my daughter Raisa a 'Gopal Bhar' comic book because she wanted it," said Al Amin, a private-

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BDR MUTINY CASE

Certified copy of 29,000-page HC verdict in limbo

It would cost Tk 9 lakh to print it in traditional folio paper, says a defence counsel

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Neither the defence nor the state side in the 2009 BDR mutiny case have yet received the certified copy of the High Court verdict, which is necessary for them to move appeals before the Supreme Court's Appellate Division, challenging the HC judgement.

The HC on January 8 released the 29,059-page-full text of its verdict, that confirmed death penalty for 139 accused and upheld life imprisonment of 185 others for their involvement in the atrocities and massacre at the BDR Pilkhana headquarters in 2009.

The verdict is one of the largest in the world, in terms of accused involved -- 846 and numbers of pages.

"We have applied to the 'copy section' of the High Court for the certified copy of its BDR verdict, after the court [HC] announced the verdict in November 2017. We also communicated with the department after the HC released the full text of the verdict on January 8 this year. But we are yet to get any certified copy of the verdict," Advocate Aminul Islam, a defence lawyer for more than 400 accused of the case, told The Daily Star last week.

At the same time, he said a financial complication has arisen over the certified copy of HC verdict, as around Tk 9 lakh would be needed for a single certified copy

if it is made in the folio (court-stamp) paper that is yellow in colour.

"Traditionally, an appeal is filed annexing the certified copy in the yellow folio paper. If the certified copy is made in the normal white paper, it will cost only Tk 30,000 to Tk 40,000," the defence lawyer said.

Aminul said yesterday he has submitted an application to the chief justice on Wednesday for his permission to receive the certified copy in normal white paper and to file appeal using such a certified copy. "The chief justice is yet to give a decision on it," he added.

Advocate Aminul said if the accused don't get permission to receive the certified copy in the normal white paper, it will be difficult for them to file appeals with the apex court challenging the HC verdict.

"Appeals will have to be filed in 30 days after receipt of the certified copies of the High Court judgement. Once the appeals are filed, the Supreme Court may set a date for starting their hearing. The chief justice may constitute a bench for hearing and disposing of the appeals in this particular case," he said, adding that it cannot be said at this moment how much time will be needed for final disposal of this case.

Contacted, Supreme Court Registrar General Md Ali Akbar told this

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'Ensure fair prices for apparel from Bangladesh'

State minister for foreign affairs urges European policymakers

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam has urged European policymakers to ensure fair prices for apparel sourced from Bangladesh, to incentivise the ongoing reform initiatives in the country's RMG industry.

The request was made during a meeting with Maria Arena, Member of the European parliament (MEP) from the Group of Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats and chair of the parliament's Human Rights Committee at the European Parliament in Brussels on Thursday, the second day of his visit to Brussels.

He briefed the MEP about key developments in the RMG industry in Bangladesh following the Rana Plaza tragedy, following Arena's particular interest in the business and human rights agenda, according to a statement from the foreign ministry.

Shahriar Alam gave a brief account of the measures taken by Bangladesh government to strengthen democracy and human rights.

Arena stressed the importance of following up on the European Union's recommendations for further electoral reforms.

"Every society and country needs to find its own equilibrium through enacting and implementing legislation pursuant to its international human rights obligations," Shahriar told Arena.

Explaining the objective of the Digital Security Act 2018 in Bangladesh, he said the law is aimed at preventing and prosecuting criminal acts in the cyber sphere that could have destabilising consequences for society in general.

He emphasised that there is no scope for undue harassment or restriction against media personnel under the law.

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DNCC to get interim mayor for 3 months

New mayors will have to wait till tenure of current board expires

HELEMIUL ALAM

As the newly-elected mayors of both Dhaka city corporations will have to wait for more than three months to take over duties, seniormost panel mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) will perform duties as mayor of the DNCC in the interim.

Ward-4 councillor Mohammad Zamal Mostafa will take the charge on Sunday, as the seniormost councillor of the current three-member mayoral panel.

A gazette was issued by the government on Thursday in this regard. It said according to section 21 (2) of the Local Government (city corporation) Act 2009, seniormost member of the existing panel mayors will play the duty of mayor until the elected mayor takes office.

"I will take charge as a mayor on Sunday," said Zamal Mostafa, who was reelected in ward-4 of DNCC in the immediate past city corporation election.

As DNCC's immediate past mayor Atiqul Islam took part in the election, he resigned from his mayoral post on December 30, 2019. Since then, DNCC has been running without any mayor.

KHOKON TO CONTINUE IN DSCC

In Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), current mayor Sayeed Khokon will discharge his duties till completing his five-year tenure.

"My five years' tenure will be completed on May 17 as per the first board meeting; until then, I will discharge my duties as

mayor," Khokon said.

MOSTAFA'S SECOND STINT

The government on September 4, 2017 formed a three-member panel to discharge the duties of DNCC Mayor Anisul Huq in his absence, after the mayor was hospitalised at that time.

The mayoral panel was formed as per the Local Government (City Corporation) Amendment Act-2009.

The panel members included ward-21 councillor Osman Gani, ward-4 councillor Mohammad Zamal Mostafa and councillor of reserved seat of ward-31, 32 and 34 Aleya Sarwar Daisy.

But after the death of Osman on September 21, 2018, Zamal, the next senior member of the panel, discharged the duty as mayor until immediate past mayor Atiqul Islam took charge in March last year. Atiqul took oath after being elected in the by-polls on March 6, 2019.

According to officials of DSCC and DNCC, the two newly-elected mayors will have to wait for more than three months as the current tenure of DSCC board will end on May 17, while the current tenure of DNCC board will end on May 13.

The first board meeting of the DNCC was held on May 13, 2015 while the first board meeting of the DSCC was held on May 16, 2015.

Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh has been elected the mayor of DSCC and

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From left, Nadia Samdani, Farooq Sobhan, KM Khalid and Liaquat Ali Lucky at the inauguration of this year's Dhaka Art Summit at a city hotel yesterday. South Asia's biggest art biennale opened in the capital yesterday through the ceremony, where Soma Surovi Jannat was named winner of the Samdani Art Award for her work "Exploring the Santal's Story" while Promiti Hossain was awarded a special jury mention for "Agyon 2".

Shringla to visit Dhaka ahead of Modi's trip

UNB, Dhaka

Newly-appointed Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla plans to visit Dhaka to prepare grounds for India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh in March.

The Indian premier is scheduled to attend the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, to be held in Dhaka on March 17.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Muhammad Imran met Shringla yesterday at the latter's office in New Delhi and discussed the issue.

"India wants to see the upcoming visit of Modi to become mutually beneficial to both the countries," Shringla said.

During the meeting, the foreign secretary noted the importance India attaches to its relationship with Bangladesh as its immediate neighbour, according to the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi.

Shringla expressed satisfaction over the excellent bilateral relations, and stressed that the neighbours can further promote ties in areas like

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DU student dies of cardiac arrest

UNB, Dhaka

A student of Dhaka University (DU) died of cardiac arrest at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Shaikot Mahmud, of Accounting and Information Systems department. He was a resident student of Bijoy Ekattor Hall.

Hall provost Prof Abdul Bashir said Shaikot felt chest pain and informed his roommates around 10 am. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

Doctors at the hospital said he died of cardiac arrest, Prof Bashir said.

After a namaz-e-janaza on DU campus, the body was sent to his village home.

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